

Letter-to-the-Editor

From: Ed Marsh
Piscataway, NJ

Date: Oct. 15, 2004

Clara Halper is the best choice to fight overdevelopment in Piscataway

It's election time and Piscataway Mayor Brian Wahler and his team of 3 Democratic candidates for Council, are again promising to curb taxes, traffic, and sprawl, and save open space and the environment. Let the record show that the Wahler administration has failed to deliver on its promises and has undermined the political process in Piscataway:

-Thirty-four acres of wetlands, woods, and wildlife are being desecrated for Lackland's 343-unit 'Birch Glen Townhouse Complex' - which could increase school crowding and taxes and place an additional 700 cars along a flood-prone section of Possumtown Road. The 67 affordable units promised for the site, were blocked by the Piscataway Council. The tract was rezoned for high-density by the Council during the administration of former Mayor Helen Merolla. (Mrs. Merolla is running for mayor this year as a Republican.) Final approval was given by the Wahler administration.

-A big-box Sudler/Verizon Warehouse was built upon a stream at the former historic Miele Horse Ranch on South Randolphville Road, and will generate an unrestricted volume of truck traffic alongside an access road to Randolphville Public Elementary School - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The warehouse was approved the same night it was introduced, preventing adequate time for the public to prepare arguments against it.

-When a resident asked for copies of plans for the proposed Sidney Road Bridge replacement, he received a letter from Township Counsel James Clarkin III, accusing the resident of unreasonable interference and threatening to take him to court. Clarkin was later reprimanded by a State Historic Sites Council member for violating the Open Public Records Act.

-During the past 25 years there have been no applications before either the Piscataway Planning Board or Zoning Board to develop the Halper Farm, other than to build a silo in 1978.

In addition, the condemnation of the Halper Farm could lead to future development of the farm by Piscataway. The 'Open Space Agreement' between Piscataway and Middlesex County (to purchase the Halper property) allows Piscataway to "sell, lease, donate, or exchange" the farm after approval from the county. (Perhaps this is why Piscataway elected officials refuse to negotiate with the Halpers for farmland preservation?) The Agreement was signed by former Mayor Helen Merolla.

-Twenty-seven acres of the Harris Steel tract on New Brunswick Ave (next to Pepsi), were rezoned for 15 residential units per acre - allowing construction of 405 units. Thirty-four houses were approved for the last farm in Arbor, the Galini Brookside Flower Farm also on New Brunswick Ave.

-Sixteen townhouses were approved for the historic River Bend-Field Homestead (also the realty office of the approved developer, Mike Santini). The townhouses will be built right next to the Raritan River Flood Hazard Zone and will increase traffic along the dangerous curve at 260 River Road.

-A forested section of the Ambrose-Doty's Brook corridor was clear-cut and filled (remember that mountain of dirt across from Walmart on Centennial Ave?) for the Jack Morris 'Centennial Plaza' strip mall.

-The Piscataway Council and Planning Board have instituted discriminatory time limits at our public meetings. The Council has also created guidelines for videotaping of public meetings, which make it nearly impossible for the average citizen to make a council videotape suitable for airing on our Piscataway Community TV station.

Is this what you want for Piscataway?

The one consistent voice of opposition to poor planning and overdevelopment in Piscataway has been Clara Halper. Clara Halper, whose 4 children attend Piscataway public schools, is running for mayor as an Independent. All who care about Piscataway's future are urged to vote for Clara Halper for mayor. To find out more, visit Clara Halper's website at: claraformayor.com.